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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 7811  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 3765  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 9913  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 4262  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGKOK 005435

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, NSC FOR PHU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN VIOLENCE: INSIDE THE ARMY'S RAID  
OPERATIONS

REF: A. BANGKOK 04653 (UNDERSTANDING THE INSURGENCY)  
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 04217 (GOOD POLICY POORLY IMPLEMENTED)  
[1](#)C. BANGKOK 04168 (LEADING ACADEMIC EXPERT SEES SOME  
IMPROVEMENT)  
[1](#)D. BANGKOK 03813 (SECURITY FORCES MOVING FORWARD  
[1](#)E. AS SECTARIAN TENSIONS SIMMER)

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Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton. Reason 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. During October 1-2 poloff travel to the deep South, a range of contacts provided a mixed picture of the situation in this troubled region, with security officials offering new details on their tactics and hailing arrest operations as resulting in lower levels of violence. Several civil-society figures questioned the sweeping nature of these raids while a local academic said that the rate of violence, while briefly dipping in July, had returned to previous levels in August. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloffs traveled to the deep South provinces of Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani on October 1-2 to discuss the ongoing separatist violence in these provinces with local contacts (Note: Septel will detail conversations on civil society, civilian development programs and popular attitudes. End Note). In contrast to our last trip in late July (ref B), there was markedly more economic activity in Pattani and normally sleepy Yala, possibly as a result of the nearing end of Ramadan. Security checkpoints--which for the first time appeared to be actively manned and used during our last trip--were once again rarely utilized by security officials. We did not see the same high-level of security patrols that we noticed in July either.

INSIDE THE ARMY RAIDS  
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[1](#)3. (C) Security officials remained optimistic that the series of broader, more aggressive arrest operations begun in June (refs B,D) have led to decreasing violence in the South. According officials at the Royal Thai Army (RTA) Civil-Political-Military task force in Yala, these arrest operations have been "very effective," resulting in nearly

1000 detained suspects since June. "We either catch (insurgents) or they flee the area...we will continue these operations." The officials said that of the nearly 1000 suspects arrested, approximately 20 percent will be charged and prosecuted in the courts, another 20 percent will be released and the remaining 60 percent will "agree" to participate in the three month job training program administered by the Army (refs).

¶4. (S) According to Army officials, these raids are more targeted than sometimes portrayed in local press reporting. Security forces do not merely target a suspected insurgent village; the mission is planned around intelligence on a suspected insurgent believed to be living in a specific village. RTA forces put together a targeting package based on human intelligence and supplemented by imagery, and in some cases, signals intelligence. Targets are often surveilled for several days if not weeks. This target information is then used to develop a raid plan, which is briefed to Ministry of Interior officials who play supporting roles in the operation. The raids are carried out jointly with police units. The timing of the raid depends on the availability of the target, some arrests take place during the day and some in the evening. Army officials said that the size of the raiding party is likewise target-dependent. For 10 suspects, the total force (Army and police combined) is likely to be around 200 officers. Prior to the raid, security forces will cut off access to the village in question, while the arresting officers may use disguises (such as paramedic uniforms) to quietly enter the village. Often, security officials will have real-time informant surveillance of the target prior to the arrest. Although the Army officials maintained the raids were joint military/police operations, they said the police and military did not train together because there was no need.

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¶5. (S) The Army officials said that, following the arrest, security officials explain to the remaining villagers why the detainees were arrested and exactly what crimes each detainee is suspected of committing. They pointed to the lack of protests against the arrests--a frequent occurrence following operations in previous years--as evidence of public support for the raids. Security forces monitor the village, and, if safe enough, civilian officials move into the area to promote development efforts. The officials claimed the Army has also expanded the number of informants in each village--sometimes by "turning" those arrested to report for the government. They admitted that about 10 percent of informants have been killed by the separatists, explaining that, in several cases, informants were providing information to several different government agencies and conspicuously spending their monetary compensation, drawing attention to their newfound wealth.

¶6. (C) Turning to general RTA tactics, the officials emphasized that military operations are improving in the South. Officers who have served in the region for multiple years are trying to institutionalize "lessons learned." Units newly rotated into the South are provided with best practices developed since the surge of violence began in ¶2004. As an example of improvement, they pointed to the rash of ambushes against RTA patrols earlier this year, explaining that these have stopped after the RTA improved its tactics, instructing units to change routes and times more frequently and to utilize more foot, vice vehicle, patrols.

POLICE MORE AGGRESSIVE  
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¶7. (C) Police officials in Narathiwat agreed that aggressive raids have led to a drop in violence, though this may only be temporary. While quick to point out that cooperation between the RTP and Army was much improved, they lamented the lack of information sharing from interrogations of these

suspects. The Army "takes them away" and only provides information "when asked...sometimes." These police officials explained, however, that security operations are improving as officials target the insurgent network at the village level. Nearly 300 suspects have been arrested in Narathiwat since June. When asked how many of those arrested would be charged and prosecuted, these police officials admitted that only a small number would, given the lack of evidence in most cases.

18. (C) Narathiwat police pointed to a major case that has resulted in criminal charges: the July 2 arrest of seven suspected insurgents at the Islam Burapa private Islamic school. According to these officials, this insurgent cell was a key bomb-making unit in the province and was arrested with a significant amount of evidence. During interrogation, these detainees confessed to 25 different violent attacks and revealed the location of a bomb-making operation in a rental house in Narathiwat city. Since their arrest, police officials said that they have not seen larger IEDs in the area (Note: as we were speaking to these officers, nine small IEDs were found or exploded in Narathiwat, resulting in minor casualties. End Note), only a handful of smaller, easier to construct pipe-bombs have surfaced. Police officials expressed frustration that, while the Islam Burapa suspects have confessed to their own crimes, they have been unwilling to share what they know about the larger insurgency and other cells in Narathiwat.

19. (C) When asked how their own understanding of the insurgency has changed over the past year, police officials said that they have a growing sense that the insurgency "is headless, that there is no mastermind" behind the violence. Expanding on this idea, police officials explained that the separatist movement is based on 6-10 member cells in most villages. In their estimation a loose group of perhaps 20 individuals coordinate operations between these village groups throughout the province. Insurgent cells often operate outside of their home territory so as to prevent being identified by locals in their home village. When arrests are made in a village, the violence does not

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necessarily cease in the area around the village because attacks are conducted by groups from other areas.

110. (C) Police officials admitted that injustice and abuses by state officials had contributed to the separatist cause in the past, but were adamant that "this does not happen any more because that will fuel the movement." They also claimed that the government is increasingly sending the "best people" to serve in the region.

BUT OTHERS NOT SURE OF SUCCESS  
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111. (C) Several contacts from outside the security forces questioned the impact of the raids. The Deputy Governor of Narathiwat said that, although a step forward, the raids have not had an impact on the almost-daily killings in his province. Petdao Tomina, a public health official and daughter of notable southern politician Den Tomina, said that the situation has not gotten better nor worse since the arrests began. The head of the Narathiwat Islamic Committee admitted that some violence continues, but claimed that "random" killings of civilians were less frequent in his province.

112. (C) Dr. Srisomphop Chitphiromsi, one of the foremost scholars on the violence in the South (refs) told us that number of attacks had fallen in July following the surge in arrests, but had risen to previous levels in August. According to his latest draft report, there were 247 insurgent related incidents in June, followed by 147 in July and 229 in August. (Note: Septel will provide more detailed analysis of Srisomphop's latest findings. End Note.) The

number of those killed and injured followed a similar pattern, with 304 victims in June, 148 in July and 209 in August.

113. (C) Srisomphop believes that the raids have led to some good arrests, but that many militants merely fled their home villages, escaping the dragnet. Echoing security officials, Srisomphop pointed to the lack of public protests against raid operations as evidence of public support for improved security tactics and a growing public backlash against the separatists.

COMMENT

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114. (C) Officials in the security services consistently maintain that violence is down since they adopted their more aggressive arrest tactics. Dr. Srisomphop statistics, however, lead us to believe it is premature to identify trends in the level of violence based on the security services new tactics. Regardless, the army and police plan to continue using aggressive arrests and detentions, believing it will lead to an end of the insurgency. We agree that it is essential for the Thai government to somehow provide security to the civilian population in the south in order to gain an upper hand against the militants, but are skeptical that sweeping arrests and detentions outside of a clear judicial process constitutes a strategy that will end the violence.

BOYCE